



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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Baucus Welcomes New Prescription Drug Benefit
Many Prescription Drug Plans To Be Offered Throughout the Nation

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) U.S. Senator Max Baucus, Ranking Member of the Finance Committee, welcomed the announcement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) today that affordable Medicare drug benefits will be offered in all states beginning January 1, 2006.

CMS revealed the prescription drug plan organizations that will be available in each state last week, but today provided more detail on the premiums and coverage options each organization will offer. The new drug benefits will be available because of the 2003 Medicare Modernization Act (MMA).

“People with Medicare have waited a long time for help with their prescription drugs,” Baucus said. “Everyone with Medicare can get help with their prescriptions by joining a plan offered by one of the national or local prescription drug organizations approved by CMS. And, in all states except Alaska, there will be even more options through Medicare Advantage organizations offering drug benefits.”

Senator Baucus expressed concern about the large number of plan options approved for the new benefit. Over 40 benefit designs will be offered from 21 different organizations in Montana. The number of benefits designs will greatly exceed 70 in several other states, like California, Florida and New York.

“Seniors and people with disabilities all across the country will have to choose from a large number of plans to access the new benefit,” Baucus said. “I urge everyone to take the time to educate themselves, and seek advice before they pick a plan.”

Senator Baucus also advised the organizations offering drug coverage to closely follow program guidelines when promoting their drug plans. Beginning tomorrow, October 1, organizations can begin soliciting their Medicare drug products via print, radio, and direct telemarketing to beneficiaries’ homes. Until now, Medicare has not allowed telemarketing by private firms that deliver Medicare benefits.

“I call upon all the firms offering drug coverage to market their plans appropriately and strictly within the guidelines established by the program,” Baucus said. “Seniors can choose wisely, but only if they are informed and not confused about the new plans available to them.”

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